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INFO RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0208
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002179

SENSITIVE
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV PHUM NI](#)

SUBJECT: Nigeria: Visit to Bauchi State

¶1. (U) Summary. DCM, Information Resources Officer (IRO) and Public Affairs Section Locally Employed Staffed (PAS LES) visited Bauchi, capital of Bauchi State in the north-eastern zone of Nigeria, October 29-30 for a Mission election-related panel discussion. They had an opportunity to meet with several state government officials, call on officers at the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, and visited several projects funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). End Summary.

¶2. (U) DCM visited Bauchi to take part in a panel discussion on the role of civil society in elections. This event was organized as part of the Mission's election related activities by the Professor Iya Abubakar Community Resource Center (CRC) - originally funded by USG under the former EDDI program - and the Mission's American Corner in Bauchi. Also, participating on the panel were Joshua Dongo Kushee, who is active on issues relating to peaceful elections and conflict resolution, and Lucius Ahamdi Ihemee, a former journalist, election activist and official at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University. The panel participants and the members of the audience of some 70 persons, primarily men, offered a number of critical observations on the conduct of the 2007 elections in Nigeria. Several noted proudly that the 2007 elections, at least at the local level, had been fairly free and transparent. Alhaji Isa Yuguda, a former Minister of Transportation in the Administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, ran for Governor as the candidate for All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) when the People's Democratic Party (PDP) declined to support him. According to those present, efforts by the PDP to hijack those elections were foiled by the citizenry, who organized spontaneously to ensure ballots were cast and counted openly, resulting in Yuguda's victory.

¶3. (U) The CRC (and the American Corner it hosts) is housed in the state library, and we observed during a tour that these facilities appear well maintained, well run and heavily patronized. The CRC maintains an active information and communication technology training program for state government workers, women, youth, street children and others to large areas of northern Nigeria including Adamawa, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe states, in addition to Bauchi.

¶4. (U) During a courtesy call on Deputy Governor Garba Muhammad Gadi, DCM offered compliments for the CRC. The Deputy Governor noted that most of the initial funding for the center came from the US Government and made a general request for more US assistance. (Note: The CRC is a project of the Education for Development and Democracy Initiative (EDDI), an interagency partnership of the State Department, USAID, Peace Corps and the Departments of Education and Agriculture, with collaboration from African public and private sectors. End note.). The remainder of the meeting was dominated by a discussion of US visa procedures.

¶5. (U) At an October 29 dinner Muhammad B. Jibrin, State Commissioner for Higher Education who had been on the job only a few months, described the state's efforts to improve the lives of its

citizens through education, noting that Bauchi last year had sent 20 students to train as pilots in Florida; was about to send 20 more to study petroleum engineering at Texas A&M University; and had concluded an agreement with an Egyptian university to train 50 doctors. He was to accompany the first tranche of 10 medical students, all women, to Cairo in a few days. In exchange for their medical education, the doctors would have to work one year for Bauchi state for every year of training paid for by the state. The pilots and petroleum engineers (who utilized post's Education Advisory Center) have no such requirements to fulfill and represent the state's investment in individuals so that they have decent job prospects in Nigeria. (Note: Jibrin himself received flight training in the US and worked previously as an airline pilot. He was appointed to his current position based on his work at the Ministry of Transportation during Governor Yuguda's tenure there.)). Suleiman Bogoro, a professor at Balewa University's animal production program, but better known to us for his work with the Forward in Action for Education, Poverty and Malnutrition NGO, commented that one of the Governor's wives had taken a special interest in basic education, which was helping to focus attention on the abysmal rate of attendance at primary schools by girls.

¶6. (U) During a brief courtesy call on the leadership of Abubakar Tafewa Balewa University on October 30, we discussed ways the University could link up with American counterparts to improve library operations, as well as plans to expand the English Access Microscholarship Program to the University's international school, should funding become available. (Note: This program provides tuition to needy high school students at secondary schools associated with universities in Zaria and Kano cities in order to assist them acquire a comprehensive education and improved English language skills).

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¶7. (U) This trip ended with a visit to a maternity clinic and a community which receive PEPFAR funding from the RAHAMA Women Development Center through the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), a USAID implementing partner. RAHAMA organizes a positive living project in ten communities in Bauchi designed to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS by increasing access to palliative care and other services. Women in the community underscored the importance of the support groups organized by RAHAMA in breaking down stigmas HIV/AIDS victims confront. In a discussion about immunization rates, the leader of the community described his support for immunization efforts, including for polio eradication, and showed off several certificates he had received for ensuring high coverage rates in his area.

SANDERS